1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

It is generally asserted that all Marias are dirty, and object to washing. It is true that Maria women dancing late at night after lying on ground covered with the ashes of camp-fires, or men and women in the *penda* fields or after a long march, are dirty; and anyone who has tried to dress a Maria's wounds knows how dirt-encrusted they can be. Sleeping between fires, or over fires in an enclosed and low-roofed hut, does not promote cleanliness. But the real reason for the idea is the fact that the Hill Maria seldom washes his loin-cloth. On this, Russell and Hiralal say (III, p. 124):— 515

Cleanliness

'In Bastar they seldom wash their clothes, as they think this impious, or else that the cloth would wear out too quickly if it were often washed. Here they set great store by their piece of cloth, and a woman will take it off before she cleans up her house, and do her work naked. It is probable that these wild Gonds, who could not weave, regarded the cloth as something miraculous and sacred, and, as already seen, the god Palo is a piece of cloth.'

This passage is all wrong. Palo is unknown to Maria or Muria Murias and Bison-horn Marias wash their clothes, and there are occasions when even a Hill Maria is bound to do so. He may not weave, himself, but he makes nets and baskets and twine, and always accepts the manufacturing processes of Kumhar potters, Kammar blacksmiths, Gharwa brass founders or Mahra weavers in a commonsense, rational way; he sees the work done quite often, and indeed there are many Marias who, in jail for homicide, have themselves become expert weavers of cloth or carpets. The reasoning processes of the savage are not unlike our own, and it is always safe to reject any such explanation as that he does not wash his cloth because he regards it as impious to wash something so sacred and miraculous, when there is available the commonsense economic explanation that he himself gives, that cloth costs money, of which he has never much, and that the oftener it is washed the sooner it wears out. So ordinarily, when a Hill Maria has his dip in a pool or river he takes off his filthy and inadequate loin-cloth and hangs it on a bush or rock while he washes his limbs, fastening it again all dirty on his clean body when he emerges. The women remove their loin-cloth, but not their *mudang*[1] and the cloth attached to it. Both husband and wife, however, must bathe in the morning after sexual intercourse and wash their loin-cloths; and a woman must invariably bathe and wash her loin-cloth, beating it out well on a stone, on leaving the menstruation hut or room at the end of her courses and of the four weeks following the birth of a child. Generally men and women wash or bathe every morning, and more often than not in the evening also. There are separate pools in [285 286] [833] [841 846]

[1] The *mudang* is explained below, under dress.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

343 231 other minor grains. Where timber is not available, these sties are made from bamboos, or even from stones. Similar but, of course, far smaller structures are made to serve as hen-coops, resting generally against the side or front of the houses.

778 361 [824] The shrine of the Village Mother, as has been stated above, is sometimes actually inside the village dormitory, sometimes just outside it, and sometimes at a considerable distance from the actual village, in a grove, if possible of *saja* (*Terminalia tomentosa*—everywhere the sacred tree of the Gond) trees. Sometimes there is also in the village, often at the end of the street opposite the dormitory, the hut-temple of the *pen* or clan-god, containing the log-frame image of the god. This will normally be found only in the village of the *pen-wadda'i* or priest of the clan-god; but sometimes, where the villages of the clan are far apart, there may be two copies of the clan-god, or the god may go to visit other villages, and have a resting-shed in each; or he may have begotten a son to deputize for him in the distant village; I have seen in a *pen-rawar* (clan-god's temple) both the *pen* himself and an embryo 'son' in the second of his three years' 'gestation'. The *pen* is always covered by a shed; but the Village Mother sometimes is just a cairn or a basket-cylinder filled with stones, or a low table-stone at the foot of a *saja* tree, and close by there is a small shed of grass thatch with open sides in which are kept the cooking pots, ladles and sacrificial knife used at ceremonial feasts. The sacred grove may in very rare cases, in villages near the edge of the lowlands, have also a hut-temple of Danteshwari Mai or Maolai, the most revered or feared Hindu deities of Bastar.

343 ● 841 There will be found well apart from the houses and the rest of the village a menstruation hut in many villages, known as *pedawo'-gha'i* to the Hill Marias, or sometimes as *dola-lon*. Here all menstruating women are secluded from the village for a week every month. Sometimes the hut has a single room, about 6 by 5 feet, with walls 3 feet high, with no windows and only a small door little bigger than the entrance to an English kennel; sometimes there are two rooms separated from each other by a partition, so that when a girl is afraid of being secluded by herself a duenna may sleep within sound of her without actual contact. The door of the seclusion room always opens away from the village, so that the affected woman may get out at night to answer the call of nature without overlooking the village or being visible to any villager. Special cooking pots and utensils are kept in the seclusion room, or else the woman's food is cooked outside and left by her door for her. [589 824] The roof is often covered with seed-bearing twigs of castor-oil plants, in all parts of India regarded as very efficacious against magic.

[text continues on p. 106]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Good AW32
Hill Maria

But in many villages instead of a communal *pedawo'gha'i* there is a separate hut at the back of each long-house for the use of the residents of each house contained in the long-house, called by the same name; or else in each house there is a *pedawo'gha'i* room known generally as *kala*,[1] with a door opening at the back of the house, separated from the rest of the house by a *binda* or low mud threshold about three feet from the back door. It is absolutely *polo* or taboo for any male to set foot in the menstruation hut or room; I once saw a son who wanted to enter the house by the back door take a flying leap from outside so as to land beyond the *binda*. In every *kala* room there is a complete set of cooking vessels and utensils for the woman to use while she is in her courses, when it is *polo* for her to touch any of the regular household articles. The menstruation hut or room is also the scene of all child-births.

There is in some big villages a resting hut for travellers or State officials, known as the *paik-gotul* or *Kos-gotul*; *paik* is the word used for a member of the old militia, and *Kos* is the general word used by all Gonds for Hindus. This may also have a stable attached.

The sketch-plan on page 105 illustrates a fairly typical Hill Maria village, crowning a mountain spur; it represents the site occupied in 1930 by the Kutru Mar village of Karangal. The long-houses here had nearly all of them bamboo fences between them and the street, running along their front about three or four feet from their front wall. The doors have been shown only in the houses in long-house no. 6. The fences only give a little privacy, and spaces useful for storing fuel; they are not garden (*bari*) enclosures. Bamboo is very plentiful around Karangal; where it is less common, these fences are absent. The stockades of thick poles at the eastern side of this village were made to afford protection from the fierce and cold wind blowing off the hills from the north-east. The Village Mother's shrine was a cylindrical basket of stones resting on five boulders in the open space between the dormitory and the *kasyeq-gaita's* house, near the latter's *udam-garia* seat of honour. This seat was a flat slab of stone resting on five thin slabs stuck vertically in the ground. The *pen-rawar* shrine of the clan-god Koruk Pen was a round hut surrounded with a bamboo fence to the east of the village by the side of the path leading to the *penda* fields; there is another shrine of this god at Nugur, a Parllo clan village a few miles away in the Indrawati valley. In Karangal the only non-Maria was a Maria-speaking Rawat herdsman, who was allowed a house site at some distance from the main street;

[1] Or *ala*; the aspirate is often dropped by Hill Marias.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

361 The villages being permanent in comparison to the Hill Maria
364 villages, they are apt naturally to be considerably dirtier, and this is
177 accentuated by the far larger numbers of cattle and goats that the greater wealth of the Bison-horn Marias enables them to keep. The houses, too, are far dirtier and more smoke-grimed, though in places the Hindu practice of constantly replastering the floors with fresh cow-dung is coming in. They are smaller also, as the spread of cultivation has restricted the available sources of timber and bamboo; but where ample forest is near, the houses are larger, and sleeping sheds for the men as well as cattle byres make individual homesteads appear larger than the homes of the Hill Marias.

342 The long-houses of the Hill Marias are never seen in the Bison-
361 horn Maria villages. Individualism is becoming yearly more marked among the Bison-horn Marias, and every man likes to have his own house and property distinct from his brothers and cousins. Their houses, instead of being parallel to the village street are generally at right angles to it, and a double row of houses, one on each side of the street, is often impossible, because the houses are too close to each other to allow each house to have its *bari* (garden enclosure) behind it, so that some householders (like those of houses B and E in the rough sketch of part of Telam village on page 121) must have their *bari* opposite them across the street. Each [351] *bari* is fenced right round with bamboo wattle-work, so that the fences of the *baris* opposite the line of houses appear like a continuous wattle-work wall along one side of the street. But there may be in the middle of the street occasional granaries or other buildings, and the houses are often irregularly scattered about with no pretence of formal alignment, so that the ordered arrangement of a Hill Maria village is completely absent. There are as many [231] pig-sties in Bison-horn as in Hill Maria villages, but they are far less elaborately and adequately constructed, though protected, like the Hill Maria sties, by leaning thatches from the sun.

361 The houses of the clan that founded the village are usually all together in one group, and there are separate groups for each of the clans with which it intermarries.

343 There appears to be no common menstruation hut among
● 841 the Bison-horn Marias, nor, indeed, any special menstruation room in their houses. A special hut or booth is erected near the house for the delivery of a child, and in a few villages near the borders of the Hill Maria country there is a hut called the *Piki-kurma* for each group of houses, where apparently young girls are segregated for their first menstruation; but I noted that I might have misunderstood the information that I was given about this hut, and in villages in the heart of the Bison-horn country was definitely told

[text continues on p. 122]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

that there was no custom of segregating menstruating girls or women.

There is in every Bison-horn village a *paik-gotul* or lodging-hut for State officials, but I have never seen a *gotul-lon* dormitory for bachelors. I was once told that there are such dormitories in a few big villages such as Ghotpal, Karli, Tumnar, Massenar and Dugeli, but could not find one in these villages; nor did the State officials who gathered information for me in various parts of the Bison-horn country ever report their existence. The *padas* (headmen) and *pormas* (village priests) whom I saw at Aranpur and other camps stated that such dormitories were a degraded institution found only among Hill Marias and Murias. They are not mentioned by Madras writers on the Koyas and Dorlas.

Bison-horn villages are not found on the tops of hills and isolated spurs like Hill Maria villages. They are located in positions convenient for communications, water supply or cultivation, like lowland villages in all countries. Many of them, especially in the Jagdalpur tahsil, have cart tracks leading to them, though these are used mainly by the Hindu and Mohammedan traders who bring their wares to the various weekly markets already established in their bigger villages. Though, however, some Bison-horn Marias have carts, and more keep cattle and do not always leave it to the Rawat herdsman servant to milk them, while many use ploughs, yet the majority of them still think it not the thing for Koitor to drive carts, or that they could never manage them; and there are, therefore, very many villages approachable only by footpaths. They make bridges very similar to those of the Hill Marias, often on a more elaborate scale.

Shifting villages

The only Bison-horn Maria village where I could find memory of a fairly recent shifting was Bare Gudra, in the Kuakonda *pargana* of Dantewara tahsil. My informant was Kartami Mukka, the old village priest (*perma*) of the village, who said that when he was young the village was settled in the now abandoned Mundi *padar* (village site); there was heavy mortality from epidemic and epizootic outbreaks for some years, and a series of crop failures. Then the eggs in his father's house began always to get addled, and his father, the *perma*, interpreting this as a final intimation that the village had to be shifted, called up the elders to see the eggs, and they agreed that the village must be shifted. They had then, on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday, to go at noon with the *perma* to select the *padar* for the new village; and to test the omens at the new *padar* the *perma* dug a small hole in the ground. In the first hole he found a root growing across the hole, and so changed to another position

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

Chapter XV

Birth and Childhood

A. Hill Marias

No Marias are unaware of the causal connexion between intercourse and pregnancy, and all women know when they miss their first menstruation that they are probably starting to bear a child. Pregnancy among Hill Marias is attended by no taboo either for man or wife, so far as I could ascertain, and the wife continues performing her ordinary routine work right up to the last day of her pregnancy. Sexual intercourse, however, ceases as soon as pregnancy is known to have begun.

During ordinary menstruation, as we have seen in Chapter VI, the wife, like all young women, is secluded for five or six days either in the communal menstruation hut, or in the ***kala*** or menstruation room or the separate menstruation hut of the house. The menstruation huts, whether communal or private, are known as ***pedawo'gha'i***, or (in the south of the Abujhmar hills) as ***dola-lon***, or (in the extreme north) as ***kurma-lon***. The term ***pedawo'gha'i*** is applied also sometimes to the ***kala*** room in the houses. These huts and rooms have been described already on pages 104-6. The Hill Marias say that their clan-god and their Departed would be angry if they gave up their immemorial custom of secluding their women during menstruation, and that no man should see a woman's face at such a time; we have seen that they often guard against the magic of women in this condition by placing castor oil plants and seeds on the roof of the hut when it is occupied. The men do not seem to have any clear idea of what happens to a woman at such times; they only know and say that she 'has gone ***pedawo'gha'i***'. There is no ceremony of any kind at a girl's first menstruation, or during pregnancy. Though children are generally born in the menstruation room or hut, and for some time after birth the mother has to live there subject to the same prohibitions as during menstruation, yet during her nine months she is free from the ordinary taboos to which she is subject during menstruation; that is to say, she is free to visit her husband in the fields and to cook his food for him, in fact to do all her ordinary household and field or market tasks. But it is taboo for a pregnant woman to pick or break anything growing. There may possibly be certain prohibitions which I did not discover,

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

674 754 823

I do not in any way emphasize it, but it seems to me curious that many crimes connected with sorcery are associated with water; they are performed on the banks of ponds or rivers and in several instances the body has been thrown into the water afterwards. Does a murderer who has killed a sorcerer believe that there is some spiritual antiseptic for him in throwing his victim's body into water?

IV

841

Grigson has studied in detail the custom of the Hill Marias in regard to menstruation, pregnancy and birth, but his notes on the Bison-horn Marias need, as he says, 'considerable supplementing'. The Bison-horn Marias have the curious belief that men, not women, were originally subject to a menstrual period. They used to tie hollow bamboos to their organs to catch the discharge. Once—according to one legend—a girl was laughing at a man in this distressing and inconvenient condition, and he lost his temper and threw the bamboo at her; in another story a sister wanted to help her brother, who could not cut his clearing properly on account of the bamboo tagged on in front of him, and offered to take it instead.

841 826

Yet other legends ascribe the origin of menstruation to a wound. There were formerly teeth in the vagina and when these were removed, the wound was not wholly healed. Once the vagina was in the crick of the leg behind the knee—you can still see its shape—but a hen pecked at it and the frightened organ jumped for safety to its hiding-place between the thighs. But it was hurt and it still bleeds every month at the recollection.

841

All the Gond tribes are very strict about the menstrual taboos, in this contrasting sharply with the Orissa Bondos, Gadabas, and Saoras, who are at a similar stage of culture and live not very far away. Grigson has described the extreme rigorism of the Hill Marias and has rightly suggested that the Bison-horn Marias are somewhat less apprehensive of the dangers of menstruation. But they too, like the Murias and the Gonds generally, are strict enough in their application of the taboo and breach of it may be punished by the Departed through the bite of a snake or the destruction of the harvest. They do not usually build special menstruation huts, but sometimes where there is a girls' dormitory, menstruating women sleep on one side of the hut and unmarried girls on the other. In such villages, no married woman may go near the dormitory nor should youths enter it. Not all dormitories however are used in this way.

841 881

Elsewhere part of the veranda of the ordinary living-house is screened off or a little hut is built in the compound for the use of

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

a woman at this time. At the menarche (for which the word used is *kumor utta*, 'the blossoming of the flower'), however, a special hut is built for the girl by women outside the village. A woman of the household brings her food and sleeps with her at night; she must bathe whenever she returns to the house. In some villages, the Marias still make a platform up a tree for the girl, who during the day must hide herself in the forest.

It is very dangerous for anyone to see, let alone to touch, a girl at her menarche. At Tikanpal I was told that if a man saw such a girl as he went through the jungle he should slap her and then go to her parents and after rebuking them, demand a fowl which he should sacrifice; then he should bathe and anoint himself with oil. At Gadapal they said that a man should throw a lump of earth between his legs at the girl, or a stick over his shoulder, and then go home and bathe. Neglect of these precautions might lead to blindness.

At the end of the period—all this refers only to the first period—the girl destroys her hut or platform during the night, throws away her cloth,[1] bathes and returns home before cockcrow. In some villages she is expected to remain for a day or two longer on the veranda of her house: if she has a married elder brother, it is the special duty of his wife to attend to her. Then she puts oil and turmeric on her body—an act which is said to symbolize her formal re-admission into caste, for during the previous days she has been regarded as excommunicated. In many Maria villages, however, the ceremonial use of turmeric is still unknown, and the elder brother's wife carries a pot of water round the house and sprinkles everyone saying, 'Now you are back again in caste'. After this the girl fetches water in an earthen pot and cowdungs the floor. In the evening her father invites some of the elders to a bottle of liquor and says, 'My daughter who was unclean all these days is now clean again'. He sacrifices a fowl to the Departed and they feast on its flesh.

There is not nearly so much fuss about the later periods. The woman has to keep out of the way, but there is no danger in looking at her, and when it is over she just has a bath and resumes her ordinary duties. But even so her daily programme is considerably disturbed. She must not sleep inside the house and, of course, sexual intercourse is strictly forbidden. She must not cook or fetch water or go to work in the fields. She must not touch cattle, pigs

[1] There do not seem to be any special taboos associated with this cloth. But the leaf-cups from which the girl eats at this time are charged with magical potency and if a witch can get hold of them she can afflict the girl with palsy.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

841 or fowls. She must not take grain from the bins or approach the Hearth of the Departed. Except at the menarche, however, she may fetch wood and leaves which may be used by other members of the household; she may fish so long as it is not in a pond; she may even dance so long as it is not at a Penkarsita and she does not touch any man.

When I was taking photographs in Maria villages I frequently came up against these taboos. At Mokhpal I was unable to photograph a girl with strikingly Mongolian features because she was in her period—the people seemed genuinely afraid that the menstrual exhalations would break the lens. At Tikanpal, where I wanted to stage a group of girls making leaf-cups, I was not permitted to do so because one of them was in her period and must not sit on a mat. At Doriras a married girl refused to be photographed standing in front of the girls' dormitory because menstruating women were accustomed to sleep there.

During a wife's period a husband is subject to the laws of a 'little couvade'. No one will eat from his hands; no one will accept tobacco from his pouch. He must not cook or fetch water. He too must not go to the grain bins or approach the symbols of the Departed. He may go to a shrine, but he must not enter it; he may cut his clearing, but he must not fire it or sow seed. He may not hunt, carry a *kawar*-pole, climb a tree, cut grass or reap a crop. If he is a Penna or Gaita he may not perform any religious rite, and if he is a Gunia he cannot divine the cause of sickness.

842 It is generally believed by the Marias, as by the rest of India, that a woman is most likely to conceive if she has intercourse on the day she has her ceremonial bath at the close of the period.

886 As by other aboriginals the climacteric is accepted by the Marias as a matter of course. 'As it appears, so it disappears.' If an elderly woman or her husband dreams of a dried-up tank or stream, it means that this crisis is approaching.

V

843 Pregnancy is diagnosed by the cessation of the menses, vomiting, swelling of the breasts and a darkening of the nipples. 'The face dries a little.' It is generally supposed that a boy is more exacting and makes the mother look fragile and exhausted, while a girl keeps her fresh and well.

843 177 During pregnancy, Bison-horn Maria taboos are not exacting and my suspicion is that originally they were as few and as casual as those of the Hill Maria, and that any elaboration is due to the influence of the local Hindus who, on the whole, pay more attention to the pregnancy than to the menstrual taboos. In other words,

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

883 quite understood why—but once they realize that the enquirer is not prepared to be deceived they talk fairly freely about them.

883 485 In all these villages there are commodious rest-houses for the use of visitors and officials on tour and when they are unoccupied —and they are but seldom used officially—the boys sleep in them as their dormitories. The boys, however, are not fully organized as among the Murias, but a leader may be appointed—in Mokhpal he was called the Sian, in Chote Timnar the Peda. Sometimes an older man sleeps with them and imposes a rough sort of discipline, fining those who are absent without cause. An old Maria, Sodi Mukha, is said to have been very proud of his management of the dormitory at Mokhpal. 'Originally', I was told in this village, 'the boys used to make their house in the middle of the place and it was theirs. But when Government ordered us to make a rest-house we had to build it not as we wanted it, but as the officers wanted it.'

883 841 The girls sometimes sleep together in the house of a lonely widow, but often have their own building. This is occasionally combined with the corporate menstruation hut. The menstruating women sleep on one side and the unmarried girls on the other. It is more common, however, for such women to sleep at home and to leave the unmarried girls to themselves. They too are not organized as in the Muria ghotul, but they are fined for quarrelling and for non-attendance. Both boys and girls have regular duties. They must all bring wood for the dormitory fire. At marriages and funerals they must collect wood and make leaf-plates. In the evening the boys and girls often meet in some central place or in front of the boys' house and dance and play games.

883 836 The relations between the boys and girls are not organized and disciplined as among the Murias. At marriages the members of the two dormitories may slip away together and sleep in some secluded place. At Penta the boys described how a girl would make a hole in the wall near which she slept. 'Then a boy creeps up and pokes a stick through the hole to wake her, and she creeps out to join him.' At Bara Harmamunda, the boys said that they actually went into the girls' house, though I fancy this is exceptional.

883 The Bison-horn Maria dormitory does not seem to play an important part in the social or religious life of the tribe. It is not established in the mythology; it does not serve as a school of dancing or as a place for initiation into sexual experience; there is no need in these pacific hills for village guard-rooms. Whether at any time the institution existed in a more flourishing form it is now impossible to say.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond A W32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

224 796 787 ceremonial hunts are held before most of the greater festivals, and their success or failure augurs a good or a bad harvest. The Muria generally take a Siraha medium with them to discover with divine assistance where game is to be found, and before starting they worship their bows and arrows. They gather under a saja tree on the path leading to the jungle, and place the bows and arrows across the way. They offer aonra rings and stand praying, 'Look Mahapurub, look Kadrengal, look Tallur Muttai, look all ye Departed, we go hunting, will we get anything?' To this the Siraha medium replies for the god, 'Unless I help, you won't get even a squirrel'. Then they say again, 'Let us not return empty; if we get anything, we will reward you with an egg or chick; if we fail, we will abuse you. If we cannot trust you for so little, how can we trust you to give us rice and kodon?'

Then the Gaita plucks a tendu or saja leaf, and puts on it a spider's web. He goes to every member of the party and wipes his face of dirt or sweat, smearing it on the leaf and saying, 'With this we remove all evil of witch or ghost; so may we have good hunting'. When he has thrown the leaf away, the hunters pick up their bows and arrows and go towards the jungle without looking back.

224 796 The Muria also go for a ceremonial hunt before the appointment of a new Gaita, who can only be appointed if they succeed in killing a female deer.

776 The god of hunting is generally called Kadrengal, the husband of Tallur Muttai. The same story is told in the Central Provinces of Mahadeo and Parvati.

> Long ago Kadrengal went into the jungle to make a plough. Tallur Muttai prepared the midday meal, but her husband was absorbed in his work and did not return. Tallur Muttai got very angry; she made a tiger out of straw, putting a wooden spoon as tail and a cooking-pot for the head. She covered it with a blanket and with lamp-black made stripes all over it. Then she said to the creature, 'Go and find my husband'. The tiger went to the place where Kadrengal was working and roared at him, but Kadrengal was not afraid and threw chips of the wood from his plough at it saying, 'Go, dogs, and drive that thing away'. The chips of wood turned into wild dogs and chased away the tiger. Since then hunters have worshipped Kadrengal and have held the jungle dog as sacred.

At Phunder the Muria said that before hunting they worshipped one or other of the Rau of the neighbouring forests. Here live Khotela Rau, Markhund Rau, Khamna Rau and Durga Rau. Each hunter worships the god that was chosen long ago by his ancestors, but should at any time his ancestors not help him then he changes and worships one of the other three. Every three years a hunter should make sacrifices to his god. If he fails to do so the god will take the form of some wild animal and attack him. It is said that those who worship Markhund Rau and Durga Rau are generally the most fortunate. [782]

At the end of a successful hunt, especially when it is a ceremonial hunt, certain parts of the animal must be removed and offered to Kadrengal, the Departed, and any other local gods whose assistance has been invoked. The Gaita sacrifices a small bit of the liver, the tip of the tail and tongue, and the man who made the kill places his bow and arrows or gun in front of the Pot of the Departed in his house and makes similar offerings to his ancestors.

224 841 A man must observe chastity and fast the night before he goes to hunt. As he goes he must carefully watch the omens. He must meticulously observe the prescribed taboos. Hunting is particularly sensitive to the contagion of

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

menstruous women. When the hunters go out into the jungle they must not walk across the footprints of such a woman nor should they see her shadow or cross it. They often suppose, when a hunt is a complete failure, that they must have walked across the footprints of a menstruous woman as they were going out. In Benur, Dansa Muria walked over the shadow of such a woman as he was going to the jungle. Soon afterwards he saw a sambhar, but as he was taking aim his bow broke and he got a swelling on his body. He went home, and when the Siraha had diagnosed the cause of the trouble, he made offerings to Kadrengal and the jungle dogs and so recovered.

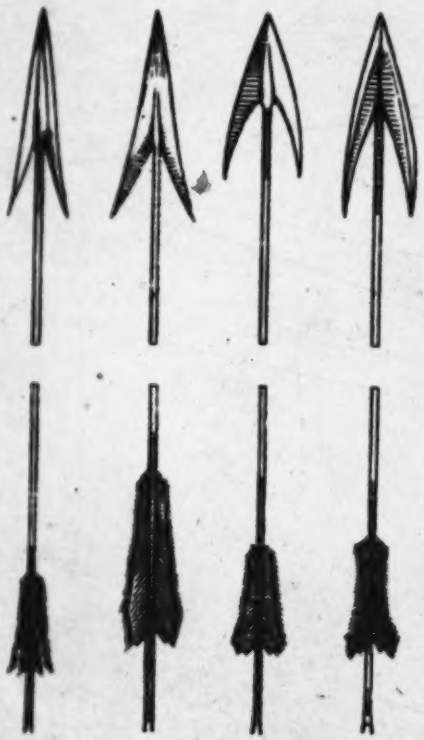

FIG. 10. Arrows and arrow-heads
Length 2' 5"

Should a woman enter her period during the absence of her husband on a hunt, he ought to return home, or if he does accompany the party he must not go near any traps or across the tracks of any animal; nor should he carry the animal when it is killed nor, since Kadrengal and the Departed live in them, should he hold a bow and arrow or a gun.

Adultery on the part of one of the hunters' wives also can ruin a hunt. This has happened in Remawand, in Bandopal, Chaniyagaon and no doubt in other places. The hunter not only loses the game but falls ill, and many kinds of misfortune befall his household; his cattle die and the outraged Dead withdraw their protection.

There are many songs about hunting, sung during the Hulki dances and in the ghotul.

I

Chikkal mitti kariya mama kiriyo kiriyo shikari shikari!
Tupak sajo kima mama.
Milli gondi tupak mama.

Gojir kanar aura mama.

O the mud of the salt-lick, uncle shikari!
Make your gun ready, uncle shikari.
The name of the gun is Maligondi, uncle shikari.
Make gunpowder with gum from the mode tree, uncle shikari.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

of which a folded leaf of the date palm is attached to ensure that the juice trickles down into the pot. A small gourd with a hole at either end is kept in the pot, which is finally protected with a bamboo cover to guard it from wind and birds.

When the climber has reached the pot, he removes the leaf and scrapes the end of the cut spadix with a knife that is kept among the branches. Sometimes he rubs it with a little marking-nut juice. Then he removes the sap from the pot and puts it in a gourd tied round his waist. Sometimes if the tree is very high, he lowers this gourd down to the ground with a cord. Then he replaces the leaf at the end of the spadix, puts the cover over the pot and descends.

There are various rules and customs about the use of the juice. It is not considered good to drink it when it is too sweet, as it has a laxative effect. For this reason a little of the old juice is always left in the pot to ferment it. To increase its power a little of the root of the danbaher tree is added. When the weather is cloudy it is considered that it will not be good. The juice of a newly tapped tree should not be given to a pregnant woman or she may abort. In fact, at the beginning, when a new tree is tapped only men drink. The Hill Maria do not give the juice at any time to a woman in her menstrual period.

There is a curious idea that the sago-palm itself is subject to a menstrual period.[1] Every month there is a space of two or three days during which the juice does not flow properly and it is not considered safe at this time to drink even what little there is. So, too, for the first week or so after a new tree is tapped the juice should be avoided, for it is then, they say, like semen. At Phunder, the Muria said that the end of the tree's menstrual period is indicated by the presence of a lotus leaf in the pot.

In some villages, the Muria believe that two Kanyang visit the palms. One is Jal Kanyang, and is a motiari; the other, Kaudo Kanyang, is regarded with characteristic inconsistency as a chelik. When Kaudo Kanyang comes to play in a tree, the juice is scanty but good; when Jal Kanyang comes, the juice flows like a river but it is less potent. Sometimes then a little sand and even fish are found in the pot.

This belief in the fish that get into the pot is widespread. Once in the days of Chaitu Gaita of Alor, a chelik climbed a sago-palm and found two *turu* fish and some sand at the bottom of the gourd. At Palli I was told that such fish were 'sometimes caught by the Salphi Maiden and taken up into the tree'. I have recorded the same idea among the Hill Maria.[2]

When a tree is tapped for the first time offerings are made to the Gorga Kanyang. In some villages a hollow bamboo full of water is brought from a stream and leant against the foot of the palm. It is believed that a Kanyang lives in this water and probably there is an idea that the tree will give as much juice as there is water in the bamboo. In order to improve the flow of juice the villagers sometimes promise the Gorga Kanyang a pig or a chicken.

At Adnar on the day they first tapped a new tree the village Gaita, followed by all the villagers, came to its foot. With red and black powder he made a row of three circles, inside each of which he drew a cross. Rice was piled on these crosses and two leaf-cups full of salphi juice were placed by them. One pile of rice was for the Gorga Kanyang, one for Kaudo Kanyang, and one for

[1] This idea is widespread: I have found it among Juang, Kond, Gadaba, Bondo and, in Bastar, among the Bison-horn Maria.

[2] Compare S. L. Hora, 'Rains of Fishes in India', *JRASB.*, Vol. XXIX (1933), pp. 95ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

V. MENSTRUATION

561 Neither in the ghotul nor outside are the age-grades of Muria children very strictly defined. There are, for example, no rites of transfer from one age-grade to another, but generally four different stages in a child's growth to maturity are recognized. The first stage for a boy or girl is babyhood; the boy is called *pila*, the girl *pili* or *noni* (daughter). This stage lasts a year. The child then becomes a *tākna peka* or *peda* (feminine *tākna peki* or *pedi*), the word *tākna* meaning 'a toddler'. This stage lasts for two or three years till the child begins to play about the house and perform little tasks, when it is known as a *leka* or *leki*. At the age of seven or eight the boy becomes a *lāyor peka* or *nangriya*, the second word implying that he is now able to go along with his father behind the plough. A girl of the same age is known as *lāya peki*, *norwa lāya* (meaning 'immature', a girl who does not yet have to wash after her menstrual period) or in Halbi *tāndak pāni ānu leki*. Finally a girl on passing her menarche becomes a *lāya*, *torita*, *tarni*, *dhāngri*. She is now *juwān* or *mast juwān*, mature. A boy too is now called *lāyor*, *dhāngra*, *dinda* (meaning unmarried) or *juwān* (meaning mature).

841 The significant moment in these stages of growth is obviously a girl's first menstruation. This is a crisis of enormous importance to her both socially and psychologically. The fact that she is subject to this monthly cycle sets her as woman in an entirely different category to man. Menstrual blood makes her dangerous, infectious while alive; it may turn her into a ghost of dread and horror after death. A dozen names and expressions for this condition testify to the importance it has in the Muria mind. It will be most convenient to give them in tabular form: all, except the last three, are Gondi.

Pendawoghai	'Her private parts are flowing.'
Kata pongta	'The bank of the field is broken.'
Netur danta	'Blood is flowing.'
Tora pongta	'Blood is flowing.'
Ārro āta	'She is taboo.'
Atāna āyo	'She is not cooking.'
Arka chhande kita	'She's in the position of one who may not touch cooking-pots.'
Pirila	'She is wrung out like a dhoti.'
Ghāt utaris	'She can't go to the water-place.'
Bhāta me hona	'To be outside,' i.e. she cannot enter the house.
Dhār bohis	'Blood is flowing.'

The first menstruation is called *yete arta* ('the call to water') in Gondi and *phulsundri* ('the blossoming of the flower') in Halbi.

841 343 In many villages, especially those to the west where the influence of the Abujhmar Maria is strong, the Muria build separate huts where their women can be segregated at this period.[1] Sometimes they make one communal hut for the whole village; sometimes there is one hut for a group of houses; occasionally a big house with a large family has a hut to itself. The Muria do not generally build such huts outside the village, but in some isolated spot within its borders. The huts are usually wretched little buildings with small doors. Inside may be seen a bed, a cooking-hearth, a few pots, some strips of cloth, a little firewood. The hut is built by the chelik—no married man may help—who are paid by the village women with liquor for their services. Every year at

[1] Among many other villages may be mentioned Sarandi, Chingnar, Kaleparas, Hochur, Dadarra and Talabera. The huts are called in Gondi *vitār-kurma* (the hut that must not be touched) or *yer nejāna-loa* (the hut for bathing in water).

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

841 ●
[343]

the beginning of the rains only the young chelik in the *nangriya* age-grade may re-thatch the roof. When they have finished, they have to pay a 'fine' of seeds or liquor to the ghotul. Girls must never touch the roof.

The motiari's life in this hut is miserable enough. At Padbera a girl exclaimed, 'You feel as if you were in jail; why has God sentenced us girls to such a punishment as this?' While she is segregated in the hut a girl must not go to a well for water, though she may go to the nearest stream. She must not go about the village for fear that her shadow may fall on a man and destroy him. She may, however, go to the forest for wood or leaves. Another girl at Talabera said, 'When we stay in the hut we always feel very hungry; sometimes we cook for ourselves, but generally the family brings it for us. Someone puts it down outside and runs away. If it is not enough, we cannot ask for more. My knees always ache, my stomach hurts, I feel lazy and unhappy, my head is heavy and in my breast is that *dak dak dak* feeling.' She went on to describe how at night they were very frightened lest some Ondar Muttai attacked them. 'We sit up together comforting one another for many hours. When we dream, we see ourselves singing and playing with the chelik and motiari. When at last we have a dream of the embankment of a tank being repaired, we know that the period is over and we will be able to return home.'

In the centre and east of the State, segregation huts are not erected. Their distribution seems to depend not only on the strength of Maria influence, but also on the style of village architecture. As we move east, we find the houses built with very large and deep verandahs where there is plenty of room for a girl to feed and sleep without coming into contact with the rest of the family. It will generally be found that where special menstruation huts are made, the village houses are small and without adequate verandah space. This is one of the reasons why the Hill Maria make a special menstruation room in their houses, even where they do not make a special hut.

But although the girls are less strictly isolated and their lot is thus less wretched than where they have to spend their days and nights away from everyone, the taboos controlling their work and movements are very strict and are enforced by stringent sanctions. These rules indeed are common throughout India,[1] though adapted to the special circumstances of Muria life. The motiari during her period may not cook or fetch water or touch the grain-bins or approach any cultivated field or clearing for shifting cultivation. If she goes into a field where the rice is sprouting it will never reach maturity. She must not step across even the mark of a plough on the ground. She cannot attend a marriage or festival. She must not go near the shrine of the Village Mother. If she is present at any occasion where liquor is being distributed, she must not accept it from the hands of a man; another girl takes it for her and hands it to her in a leaf-cup. She must not take part in any games or dances, particularly in any ceremonial dances.

The most stringent taboo is on her relations with men. Sexual intercourse is absolutely forbidden; though the woman does not seem to be affected, the man who goes to a menstruating woman will die. There is no cure for him, magician and priest are alike helpless. He is lost. The woman must not even touch a man or let her shadow fall upon him. Should a man be accidentally touched he is excommunicated and must be purified by passing through 'a ring of fire' before anyone will accept food or tobacco from him.

[1] For a full account of these, see my paper, 'Primitive Ideas of Menstruation and the Climacteric', *Essays in Anthropology Presented to S. C. Roy* (Calcutta, 1942), pp. 141–57.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

841 [688] In Chandabera the Muria described how once when a man had touched a menstruating woman the Gaita heated gold and touched his forehead, tongue and shoulders, sprinkled him with rice-water and water in which gold had been dipped, made him drink it in the name of the Earth Mother who had been insulted, and imposed upon him a heavy fine.

This is the same penalty as that extracted from a murderer on return from jail. It does not necessarily mean that the Muria regard the two offences as morally equal, but it does suggest that they regard them as equally dangerous in the supernatural field.

A woman's husband also is subject to the strictest rules. During his wife's period, he must not dig the ground, visit his fields, either to sow or reap, thatch the roof, go to the thrashing floor, touch the grain-bins in the house, or visit the village shrines. If he visits his thrashing floor the quantity of his grain is reduced by half. But he may go to the ghotul and sleep there, though no one will take tobacco from his hands. He is allowed to fetch water and cook; [520] indeed he generally has to do this work when his wife is barred from it, and many are the ribald jests that greet a young husband caught carrying pots from the well.

841 539 If he is a priest, he cannot conduct any religious ceremony during his wife's period, and festivals often have to be postponed on this account. A curious story from Korenda illustrates the special difficulties that may trouble a polygamous Gaita.

> At the beginning of the world, there was no god of the Wadder clansmen, though they were numerous enough, while on the other hand there was a god of the Partabi though there was only one solitary male member of the clan. He was the Gaita and he had seven wives. Since one or other of his wives was in her period all the month round, he was never able to perform his priestly duties properly. They were due to eat the new rice on Monday: on Sunday night his eldest wife began her period. They postponed the festival till Friday: but no sooner had the eldest wife bathed on Wednesday than the youngest began on Thursday. And so on, he could never keep the festival, till Dokara Deo began to trouble the Gaita and he gave both his gods, Budha Deo and Dokara Deo, to the Wadder clan.

841 How do these taboos affect the ghotul? The great majority of Muria girls experience the crisis of the menarche while they are still motiari. Only in a few villages like Malakot do the people try to get girls married before maturity. Even where they are married, the little wives may sleep in the ghotul till they are mature. At her first period, a girl-wife gives *jori-darango* or a gift of liquor to the boys and girls 'to show her companionship with them is ended'.

841 522 The ghotul members take a great interest in the menarche. Everybody knows all about it at once and there is a lot of joking and laughter. 'Our new pot is broken, where can we go and clean it?' 'She has trodden on dirty leaves.' 'The embankment of the field is leaking.' When the chelik see the girl sitting plaintive and embarrassed behind her house or in the segregated hut they call to her, 'Have you got a baby, or what is the matter with you? Which is it, a girl or a boy?'

841 I describe elsewhere the special precautions that are taken at the menarche to ensure freedom from conception. A girl must be careful not to throw away her cups and plates for if a witch can get hold of them, she can cause her a great deal of trouble. She should, on this occasion, take these vessels and the ash in which she has cleaned her pots to the river for the Yer Kanyang or

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

841 Nahani Deo. In some villages, however, the older women do not allow the girl to go to a stream or tank at all. They bring her water and let her bathe and wash her clothes on a stone in the compound.

We can understand how the rules affecting the menstruating motiari must be particularly strict when we remember that the ghotul is a shrine built by Lingo Pen, still sacred to him, and that the children within its walls are not only specially protected from marauding ghost or evil nightmare, but are also subject to the taboos and disciplines of *le monde sacré*. The girl therefore is forbidden for a period varying from four to seven days to enter the ghotul or even touch its fence. She must never, of course, touch a chelik at this time. If she did, they told us at Kajen, he would go mad. Even if her shadow fell on him while he was drinking, he would fall senseless to the ground. Should a girl go into the ghotul concealing her condition, the ashes of the ghotul fire would scatter in all directions and might continue to do so for two or three days, a sure sign that Lingo Pen is offended. When the culprit is discovered, she must offer a bottle of liquor to the insulted deity.

There is naturally considerable risk that a girl may begin her period during the night or evening while she is in the ghotul. A chelik in Munjmeta described what is done. 'She feels the warm blood, she shows it to her chelik and goes away at once.' 'Once', he said, 'his motiari did not realize what had happened and spent the night in the ghotul. When it was discovered in the morning, he himself was fined three long pieces of wood.'

The motiari is not, of course, allowed to go on the Diwali, Chherta and Mahua Dandar excursions while she is in this condition. If the period only begins after she has started out, she must make an offering to the local god and return home. Should any motiari begin her period at the moment when the chelik are about to start for their Pus Kolang dances, they abandon the trip. If during a boy's absence on this expedition his 'ghotul wife' should menstruate, he is warned of the fact by a dream and must make offerings to Lingo Pen. A chelik may go to the ghotul even while his special partner is in her period, but no one may take tobacco from him. The others tease him, saying, 'Don't worry, she'll be all right in two or three days. Perhaps you dug a little too deeply last night'.

If a girl is to be married, and her period begins on the eve of her marriage, this is postponed for a day; then she takes a bath and declares that officially all is well. Once when I went to Borgaon for a wedding, the bride entered her period on the critical day and the ceremony was postponed. On another occasion, when the omens did not come right, the people made a search through the wedding party to see if any relative was concealing this condition.

841 A girl does not bathe her whole body until the flow of blood ceases, but she does change and wash her pubic cloth, though she has to be very careful where 515 she puts it to dry for fear a witch should steal it. This cloth must never be touched by a man. It is either thrown away after every period or hidden 291 in a safe place outside the house. Along the banks of the Boroda river near Temrugaon I noticed many earthen pots, some floating in a backwater, others hidden in bushes. These were the pots in which the menstrual cloths were boiled to get them clean.

841 At the end of the period the girl goes as secretly as possible to a stream for her bath. She must be careful not to meet any man on this day, for should 515 his shadow fall upon her, her first child will resemble him. In some villages the girl must take two baths, in others she must take three. After the first bath she cleans and cow-dungs the room where she will sleep, washes all her clothes and sprinkles oil and haldi in the house and on her body. She then

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

841 515 sleeps at home for a day, still subject to most of her taboos. On the following day she bathes again and anoints herself, or allows her mother or sister to anoint her. In most villages she is free after the second bath. She may go again to the fields and in the evening to the ghotul. In Binjhli, however, and in a few other villages, I have found the rule that she must have three baths: the Deer Bath on the fifth day after the beginning of her period, the Lizard Bath on the sixth and the Hare Bath on the seventh. Only on the evening of the seventh day may the girl return to the ghotul. This is partly a hygienic measure—the Muria consider that a girl who finishes her bathing on her fourth day is 'as dirty as a Hindu' but one who takes three baths is 'white as a Raja'—partly a measure of birth control. The Muria [842] share the universal Indian belief that conception is most likely to occur on the day the menstrual flow ceases.[1] This is commonly on the fourth day, and so by segregating the motiari for the dangerous period the Binjhli chelik consider that the risk of pregnancy is lessened. Even so, when a girl returns to the ghotul after her menses, she warns the boy with whom she is sleeping: 'I have just bathed my head; if there is a baby, it will be yours: will you be responsible for it?' In Binjhli the chelik told us that the girls make their [833] lovers promise to practise *coitus interruptus* on this day, and it is the duty of the Belosa to warn the girls about it. In Markabera, however, the girls returned to the ghotul directly their flow stopped, and no special precautions were observed.

841 522 When the girl returns to the ghotul after her period the boys rag her. 'O Tiloka, the bank was broken, the water was pouring out like a river, we were tired of mending it. But now all the water has run out and the field is dry.' Or sometimes the boys say, 'Your pot had a hole in it, but today you mended it with lac'. And again, 'Who dug the hole and let the water out?' And that evening they pretend she is still unclean and cry, '*Chi chi chi*; don't touch me!' And they may say to her special chelik, 'What a lucky man you are: your rice has ripened quickly: tonight you can cut the crop'. But it is said that after the first menstruation, in those ghotul where there are ghotul mates, the chelik treats his girl with special tenderness. 'There is no end to his love for her; he doesn't let her sleep all night.' In a mysterious way, his motiari has become a woman; she is different, mature, and doubly precious.

841 787 As we would expect, the girls often suffer from dreams at this time. In Padbera they said that the Yer Kanyang who lives in the river feeds on the blood of washed-out menstrual cloths. This naiad is very lonely with no one to keep her company; so she visits the motiari in the menstruation hut and plays with them in their dreams. Because these girls dance with her all night, they are slack and weary during the day. The girls at Padbera can tell when they are about to begin their periods because they dream of the Yer Kanyang and see the river. The river-dream is everywhere prophetic of the period, especially if husband and wife or chelik and his ghotul mate dream of a river in flood. This is an important dream, for it enables the women who are favoured with it to beware of going to tabooed places where their period might begin unexpectedly. If girls dream of fire or of flying up into the sky, it is a warning that they will suffer from irregular menstruation. The end of the period is heralded by a dream of a dried-up pond.

841 776 Breach of the menstruation rules is very serious. The importance attached to them may be seen by the interesting and curious case of the goddess Pendra-wandin. This goddess, whose story is given on page 178, was originally

[1] Cf. J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1930), Vol. II, p. 368

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

the motiari Hidde who died for love. Unhappily, when the girl committed suicide, she was in her catamenial period. The result is that she is regarded in some places as an untouchable goddess. Some ten years ago, her symbol was taken to the great festival at Keskal, and her Siraha went into the shrine of Bangaram, consort of Danteshwari. The Siraha of Bangaram and Hinglajin Matal stopped them. There was a great quarrel, and Pendrawandin's Siraha took the case to the court at Kondagaon, whence it went in appeal to the Maharaja. He ruled that the goddess was banned from visiting the shrines of Knar Pat (son of Kanda Dokara), Danteshwari, Bangaram and Hinglajin Matal, but that she might be taken elsewhere.

All over the State there are stories of the unhappy fate which has befallen those who have broken the menstrual taboos. In the Karikhodra ghotul I was told of a shocking incident in Jatabera (Kanker State) where two menstruous women went to a *dahi*-clearing, picked a cucumber and ate it. A tiger attacked them and killed them both.[1] At Tarabera, Lati quarrelled with his wife when she was in her period and struck her twice. Soon afterwards he hanged himself in his field. 'The Departed were angry with him for touching an unclean woman and drove him to kill himself.'

[1] This rigorist attitude towards the menstruating woman is by no means confined to the aboriginal in India. Thus, to give but one example, M. N. Srinivas describes the traditional outlook of the highest Hindus of Mysore. 'The menstruum is nothing but the sin of Brahmin-killing in liquid form.' The degree of defilement varies from day to day. For the first day's impurity a woman will be punished by being reborn as an untouchable, for the second day's as a Brahmin-killer, for the third day's as a washerwoman. The daughter of the sage Udanka was nightly transformed into a mass of worms because seven lives earlier she had touched some cooking-vessels while in her period.—M. N. Srinivas, *Marriage and Family in Mysore* (Bombay, 1942), p. 129.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

brass rings and beads and placed them on the corpse; the men brought bits of cloth. The members of the household fasted from the time of the old man's death until he was cremated. The ceremonies were marked by violent manifestations of grief. When the bamboo bier was brought to the house, the wives of the Waddai, Gaita and Hanagunda fell upon it and lay there. They said that this meant that they too wanted to be taken out and burnt, a curious echo of the Sati tradition. Straw was spread on the bier and when the corpse had been placed there, bits of cloth were laid on it by the male relatives present. The women gathered round the corpse again, kissing it and weeping bitterly. It had been lying with its legs towards the door of the house, but now it was lifted up by the bearers and its position changed so that the head was pointing to the door. They touched the door thrice with it saying, 'You made this house, come here again in your next birth'.

Then, led by the drummers, the corpse was carried out to the cremation-ground. The grand-daughter with her hair undone followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice upon it as she went along. As they passed a path that crossed theirs, they dropped a little rice so that if any other ghost came he would eat it and go away. Everyone went to the funeral. Menstruating women are not normally allowed to attend, though sometimes they may come if they stand at a little distance.

When the party reached the pyre, they went round it anticlockwise once and placed the bier on the ground. Once again the women fell upon the corpse weeping and kissing it. They lay down beside the pyre and had to be pushed away before the business of the funeral could proceed.

Then one of the women put a little tobacco in the mouth of the corpse. The body was placed upon the pyre. Some of the bits of cloth with which it was covered were left there; the rest was distributed between the drummers and the relatives by marriage. The Hanagunda removed the packets of rice which had been tied to the waist of the corpse and threw them to left and right. The body was entirely covered with a cloth and the Hanagunda ripped this open just over the mouth. A piece of grass which had been brought from the roof of the house was put into the mouth of the corpse and

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

754 that his wife did not bear him a child, he went to the Waddai who discovered the real reason, performed the proper rites and soon a large family came into being.

754 755 841 Witches can injure women by prolonging their menstrual periods. The Siraha can counter this by offering sacrifices to the Dead and to the Mirchuk. In Kameli a woman who was suffering from mennhorragia was cured by this means. [762] But sometimes the Siraha can do nothing, and in despair the unhappy woman may hang herself.

754 At Borgum I was told that only widows can perform black magic and that they usually call on the ghosts of the dead to help them in their wicked deeds. Here they gave me an interesting account of how a witch can take precautions against discovery. She takes her familiar, say the ghost of a murderer or suicide, with her to an ant-hill and there she 'binds its mouth' by removing some of the earth from the hill and uttering charms. She says to the ghost, 'When the Siraha questions you, do not disclose my name'. Then she replaces the earth. It is believed that, just as any earth that is removed from an ant-hill is automatically filled up the next day, so misfortune will enter the house of the ghost she has bound if it betrays her.

[751] 754 683

Charm against disease, made of small bits of chicken-bone.

Dread of this witchcraft or enchantment is a very powerful factor driving men to violence, for the fear is still a live one and the dangers are supposed to be great. Guma Hunga left his home and village because he believed that his family was being bewitched by a man called Burgi. A year afterwards he saw his enemy in the new village to which he had moved, and murdered him in a sudden access

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

in his house, pulling himself up by a rope tied to the roof. But at last he could bear it no longer and managed to hang himself with the very rope that had been so long his friend.

Menstrual troubles are always due to the magic of a jealous woman, usually a frustrated and malicious widow. The catamenial period in any case is regarded as a time of contagious danger and taboo, and any irregularity is sufficient to cause a strong psychotic disturbance.[1] Karti Sukri, a young girl of only fifteen years, apparently suffered from menorrhagia; she bore it for six months and then hanged herself with her own cloth from a mahua tree near her home. Markami Kosi had been married for twenty years, but she suffered acutely during menstruation—'the pain was so great she behaved as if she were mad'—and she too committed suicide. As is often the case when a woman suffers from menstrual troubles, the husband had married a second wife and I have little doubt that the jealousy and annoyance inevitable in a polygynous household played its part in hastening Markami Kosi's death. The younger wife, however, did her best to save the other woman; she cut her down while still breathing and tried to revive her.

In all these cases, matters were made worse by the failure of the magicians to effect a cure. This naturally added fear and depression to the physical suffering of the patient. Whenever the Siraha is found helpless, an atmosphere of deep gloom and apprehension is created: the supernatural powers arrayed against the sufferer take on a new majesty and horror.

VII

CRIME AND SUPERSTITION

I have not found many superstitions about crime, probably because there are so few professional criminals among the Maria. We have already seen how valuable blood is as a fertilizer. In one case I heard of women throwing their rings on a murdered man's memorial stone as it was being carried to the grave. Afterwards they picked up these rings and wore them believing them to be extremely lucky. But

[1] Havelock Ellis goes so far as to say that 'whenever a woman commits a deed of criminal violence it is extremely probable that she is at her monthly periods', but Stanley Hall assembles evidence to show that this view is over-stated. Hall, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 500.